

# The Lance, the Spear and the Pike

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A clear distinction must be made between spears, lances and pikes. All three are so-called "shaft weapons", but they differ much from each other.

## The Lance, the Spear and the Pike

### The Lance

The most important weapon of a knight on horse is the lance. During the late 13th century charges of knights are performed with a couched lance under the arm, point aiming to the front. This lance was rather long, three to four meters, with a small tip. The tip was small and sharply tapered because it was designed to pierce maille and plates of armour. The most important function of a lance is thrusting, seated on horseback. The shaft was almost always made of ashwood and the same overall thickness.

A knight could attach a small pennon to his lance, bearing his colours. For a simple knight, these were triangular in shape. A bannerlord, commanding about twenty other knights, had a rectangular banner.

## The Spear (or Javelin)

A lance is not designed to be thrown, being too heavy and too long. A spear was used for that. A length of about two meters and a thinner shaft allowed this weapon to be thrown. But this kind of fighting was only very seldom used in the late 13th century.

## The Pike

A much-favoured weapon by footsoldiers was the pike. It was shorter than the lance (between two and three meters) but had a thicker shaft. The tip was quite the same though. The weapon could be used in two ways. In attack situations it serves to keep the enemy at a "safe" distance. In defensive situations the pike can be planted in the ground to take the shock of a charge with horses. This happened during the Battle of Courtrai.

The combination of the pike with the goedendag turned to be an extremely effective defence. The Flemish soldiers at Courtrai were lined up in a way that every man with a pike had a man with a goedendag as his neighbour. The men with the pikes took the shock of the charge by the French knights and the men with the goedendags finished the job.